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Steward.

How Much Owest Thou My Lord?

By S. J. Humphrey, D. D.

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WHICH WAS THE INSANE ONE ?

The daily press some years since was taken up with accounts of the singular life of Miss Sarah Burr, who left in her will some \$3,200,000 for objects of charity. According to the evidence produced in the New York courts in the attempt to break her will, she lived very much *the life of a miser*, and that, apparently, for the purpose of making her bequests reach the largest amount possible. It is said that although her *income was \$400 a day*, she bought but four dresses in twenty years ; that she wore one calico dress five years ; that she never had her carpets lifted lest the beating might wear them out ; that when she went out, which was seldom, *she never took her eyes off the ground*, for fear she might fail to see the money which some careless one had dropped and many other queer things of the same sort. But queerest and most unaccountable of all was her habit of *giving hundreds of dollars*, to visitors from orphan asylums and like institutions with such an unsuspecting and open-handed ease that she *seldom took a receipt* for her gifts. And this strangest of all freaks culminated in the *bequests of her will*.

We have no knowledge whatever of this singular old lady save that derived from the public prints. If the evidence is correctly reported, it must be confessed that there was something *very unusual*,

if *not unbalanced*, in the quality of her mind. Certainly she was eccentric. But the departure from the center, upon the one side at least, was so humane and generous that we can not help seeking to find it *the segment of a circle* higher than men usually comprehend. May it not be that at some point in her earlier years the idea had somehow come to her that in order to understand and truly sympathize with the woes of others, she must, as near as could be, *put herself in their place*; that it was not enough simply to give money to the unfortunate, but that in some way she *must suffer* with them? It is conceivable that she may have thought she saw some warrant for this in the example of One who "pleased not himself." And possibly there clung to her memory *certain words from an old Book*, which said of this One that "though he was rich, yet *for our sakes* he became *poor* that we *through his poverty* might *be rich*." And we may farther suppose that, as years increased, these ideas, through the infirmities of age, became exaggerated into the peculiarities that have been occupying the attention of the courts. And why may we not think it possible that *this miserly way of hers*, for such a purpose, after all brought her *more comfort* than any personal use of her riches could have given? As she shut off the burners that the monthly gas-bill *might not exceed* a half a dollar, there may have risen to her dimmed eyes a vision of the *many darkened rooms* to be made light by her munificence. The *three cane-bottomed chairs* produced in

court, upon which, when tired, she used to stretch herself, to save her bedding from wearing out, were *certainly not a comfortable couch*. Nevertheless, comfort might have come to her lying there, in the thought that the money she was saving would keep many a poor outcast from the *harder couch of the curb-stone*. And so, after all, in a better and higher estimate, it may appear that she was of sound mind enough, at least, to make a will that should stand in the courts.

But, if not, what should be said of *old Mr. Gripus over the way*? He died a millionaire, and left a will. There were some queer things in his life. Was he of sufficiently sound mind to make a right disposal of his property? *Let us try his case in court*. It may need to be a SUPERIOR COURT. But all the more we shall look for a true judgment there. It appears from the evidence that this man also *was excessively eager* in the acquisition of money. The entire powers of his mind were bent on what he called *the main chance*. It was the *muck-rake* from morning till night. When he walked abroad his eyes were bent on the pavement in his deep thinking how he *might corner the market* and suck the life out of *the foolish flies* that had ventured into the web of his "operations." He never put off the closefitting suit of his selfishness, not even for washing; *not once in forty years*. THIS WAS THE ONLY SUIT HE HAD. He did pay out considerable sums of money, but it was exclusively for himself and his family. It was in the mental and soul life where the *miserly stint* manifested itself. Every

item in the strange history of the old lady as to personal use of her wealth *could be matched and MORE*, by the beggarly manner of his inner life. It was poverty-stricken to the last degree. *Not one gift* of charity relieved his shriveled soul from its bare covetousness. It would seem that in his old age this habit of mind grew into a *kind of mania*. A confidential servant affirms that at night, when the doors of his mansion were closely barred and the usual watch set, he was accustomed to *cautiously open his safe*, and finger over his bonds and count from one bag into another his gold; and that as he did so there would come into his eyes, which were usually dull and furtive in their glance, a *strangely wild gleam of delight*.

And yet, when this man died, no one ever questioned his will. He left his money, *seeing he could not take it with him*, to his children, all of it. A daughter had married a dissolute French count, who had already discounted her portion to pay his *gambling debts*. The oldest son, Gripus, Jr., was quite after the style of his father, and to him went the largest portion. He had married and was raising *another brood of groundlings* to go through the *same barren round* of lives that are lived unto themselves. Out of this vast estate, in its gathering and in its disposal, through the strange and crooked perversity of this man's avarice, *not a farthing* ever went purposely to *benefit society* or even alleviate the woes of the unfortunate.

Now it is manifest that in both these cases there was *something wrong in the mental condition*. It

may be a question whether either of them was competent to make a proper disposal of an estate. But if we must choose between the two—between this man, unnaturally selfish in his life, and strangely narrow-sighted at its end, and this woman queer and stinted as to herself, but *writing a royal beneficence into her will*—can we hesitate to say, in the higher judgment, which was “of a sound and disposing mind”? *If one, and not the other, was insane, WHICH ONE?*

A CHURCH REVERIE.

A queer conceit came to me the other day in church. The deacons were taking up the usual collection, and the organ was filling in the silence with a deft and *gently-fingered offertory*. I have noticed that the music for this part of the service is generally of the *pathetic order*. And I have supposed that it was intended to shadow forth the sorrowful need to be relieved by the gifts of the worshipers. Or, perhaps, the intent is to utter, in *some dim and intangible way*, that pitying condition of soul of which the offering is thought to be a fitting expression. All at once the notion came into my head, what if the organ were so endowed that it should actually *body forth in sound* the real feelings of the different people *as the contribution box passes from pew to pew!* It happens that our organist is a lady who unites to an exquisite taste, amounting almost, if not quite, to genius, a most tender Christian experience. And so her playing

is not only choice and satisfying to the musical ear, but is altogether helpful to the *earnest work* of the *preacher* in the pulpit below. So susceptible is she to the varying spiritual atmosphere of the service that she seldom fails to reflect, sometimes in a striking way, the *very spirit* of the hour. Now, I said to myself, it is possible to conceive that this delicately organized soul should be made so sensitive as to *come into swift and immediate communication* with every soul of the congregation, so that there should be continually passing over to her, along invisible sympathetic lines, with thought-like rapidity from each one, *the varying feelings* with which the outstretched invitation for offerings was met. And thus the organ, which sometimes seems to be only an extension of her own musical self, under her swift fingering, should interpret and flash out in sound *the secret thought of each contributor*. What a composition that would be! What melodies! What discords! But my little conceit was *overset* almost as soon as born by a sense of the impossibility of it. The deacons were three. And the *simultaneous chink of coin* from different parts of the church showed that the outcome in music could *only be confusion*. But not to be defeated my fancy took another tack. In some degree the same music comes with various effect to different persons *according to the state of mind they are in*. It is conceivable that what is melody to one, may be, by some *internal jangling, discord* to another. I said then: What if, by some sudden interposition, the chords of each ear should be so

variously adjusted that this gently breathed offertory in passing through them *should express* to *each one* the exact tone and *spirit of his gift*. Then there would be no confusion. Each person would hear, interpreted in music, the precise significance and quality of his giving. But what surprises would there be! For the *ostentatious contributor*, as soon as the gold drops from his hand, the quiet melody *becomes an astonishing blare of trumpets*. The *warble of spring birds* greets the dear child as with eager haste he half rises to throw in his *brightest penny* earned by himself for this very offering. A *serpent's hiss* startles the churl whose only gift is a *smile of contempt*. In response to a thank-offering, the classic symphony somehow strangely shades off into that grand old refrain :

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

A *clang of dissonances* smites through the ear of the *mean spirited fellow* who drops in the clipped coin *refused of the butcher and the newsboy*. There comes to him, who, in a glad consecration gives back to the Lord a stated and liberal portion of his gains, a rare and soul-satisfying strain,

*Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.*

And what music does she hear, who, with *tear-wet eyes* and up-lifted prayer, gives out of her *very living* a sum which weighed in "the balances" of the sanctuary is *more than* "THEY ALL?" It is the melody of the unseen Savior's voice, and there

mingles with it the *grateful song of repentant souls* saved through just such offerings, and *echoes of distant hallelujahs* sung by rejoicing angels ! But another fancy comes. What if the sound from these *mysteriously strung ear-chords* have the power to perpetuate themselves, *singing or clanging* on, through all the week ! What if they become louder and more intense, as from Sabbath to Sabbath the spirit of that hour *grows into a life habit* ? What if this marvel should *reach into the Beyond*,, transforming the celestial melodies of "the harpers harping with their harps" and the new song. But just here the preacher announced his text. What other fancies might have come can now never be known. I called in my vagrant thoughts and fixed them on the sermon !

MAMMON VERSUS MISSIONS.

Why do the chariot wheels tarry? God's purposes of love for the lost race seem to be ripening. The kingdoms of the world are open. The Bible is now written into nearly every human language. What waits that the tidings of infinite grace in the gospel should not, *in this generation*, transform these kingdoms into the kingdom of God's dear Son? There are still great obstacles in the world of heathendom; but clearly the chief hindering factor lies in the *body of professed believers* AT HOME. What is this hindering thing? If we mistake not, that which was declared of old to be the *root of all evil* is the root-sin of the church today—THE LOVE OF MONEY; not so much the love of money for its own sake as the desire to gain it for the leisure and the luxury it will buy.

Looking soberly at the real facts as we see them around us, is it not manifest that the *pursuit of wealth* is the absorbing interest of Christians and worldly men alike? And is it not this, fronting as we do the tremendous urgency and opportunity for the speedy conversion of the world, more than any other thing that sits like a paralyzing nightmare upon the energies of the professed friends of Christ?

Consider how strong this passion is. There is a difference in temperaments and tastes, but with

the mass of men life consisteth in the abundance of the things possessed. *To get and to hold* are the prime factors of existence. Money answereth all things. It buys power, luxury, exemption from toil, gratification of appetites, tastes, desires, lusts. The love of possession easily grows into an *absorbing passion*. In the toil and moil of getting, the man, so to speak, interbraids himself with his gains. He comes to have no life of any account apart from his gettings and his holdings. *His clutch upon the coin has so imbedded it in his soul* that to give away a piece is almost, as it were, to take the *quick flesh* with it.

In the company of this passion there comes a *whole pack* of other evil things—envy, covetousness, revenge, deceit, fraud, contemptible stealings and savings, hardness, oppression of labor, pride, the drying up of social and domestic affections, separations from one's kind, self sufficiency, a sense of *independence even of God*.

The Scriptures class covetousness *with idolatry* and all abominable sins. This passion does not necessarily put itself out in unlovely shapes. It may take the form of extravagance in dress, ornament, household furnishing, lavish outgoes for art and equipage, expenditure in the feasts and follies of fashionable life—any departure from the moderation and simplicity which, by common consent, belong to the Christian life. *It is the service of self with money*, whether in the getting, the hoarding, or the spending.

This passion appears among all classes of men

and in all degrees of strength. The heart of the beggar may cleave more to a few cents than that of a rich man to great sums.

The fact is, the roots of it lie in human nature. It does not belong to the accidents of birth or favorable environment. It is liable to show itself in any human soul.

This natural love of money-getting is *blistered into an intense activity* by the comparative ease with which wealth is now obtained. *There is nothing like it in history.* It is only within a generation that millionaires have begun to multiply. Girard and John Jacob Aster *were very marvels* when some of us were young. But to-day the number *reaches into the hundreds* who exceed these men in the property which they had when death overtook them; and there are some who have *heaped up fortunes* of which they never dreamed.

The rapid advance in money accumulations among millionaires is more than matched by the *great increase of wealth* among the common people, as indicated by savings in banks and building associations. Such easy and common success in this *hot haste to be rich*, joined with the natural passion for money, makes resistance to the general drift almost desperate. *The craze for wealth* is a respectable selfishness. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." The whole tendency of society is that way. It is the absorbing interest among men.

Now this is the condition in which divine grace finds the man it will save. It is on *this battle-*

ground more than anywhere else that the struggle for submission to God and sanctification is fought. Self-surrender is a necessity to any progress towards a consecrated life. Some things are easily granted, but the *giving away from himself* of that which a man has striven for with all his might, that to which his soul naturally and intensely clings, is a *test* which poor human nature cannot endure. Only *divine grace, supernatural, omnipotent*, can work this willingness in the soul, and the process is too often painfully slow.

It is not a hard thing for one in the glow of a fresh consecration to say, "*I dedicate all I am and have to the Lord.*" The trial comes,—the real battle is in the details of an *everyday practical carrying out* of this surrender of one's self and belongings. Gosner says, "A man may pledge and stake his head a hundred times. But if one were to proceed to *take it from him*, he would feel for the first time how firmly it sits, how it sticks to him."

Not seldom a consecration made in all conscious good faith is brought to a sudden halt by an unexpected *demand for fulfilment*.

It is easy to give a note payable on demand. *To pay on demand* is the hard place in the transaction. "*Not that, Lord, anything but that!*" How often has even the ripe Christian said this, when the sacrifice offered up in the abstract, in all honesty it may be, was accepted in a call to transmute it into some *real sober fact of giving*, giving down to the bone?

This assertion of the old selfish grip on one's

property is all the more subtle and resistant in that a *certain degree* of the love of possession is right and proper. The strife is along a border line. "Love of money is the root of all evil" is the *battle cry* on the one side. "If any provide not for his own, he is worse than an infidel," is the *fierce rejoinder* on the other. The fight continues, with varying fortunes, through the entire lives of most of us.

If the command were, as the old monks thought, to give up literally all worldly possessions and betake ourselves to the deserts in *hair shirts* and *leathern girdles*, the way of obedience would be clear. But the problem is to gain and hold property in a diligent and steady thrift, and yet so to do it as *not to come into bondage thereto*, but to use it wisely for ourselves and beneficently for our fellows.

It is not a square, open battle, such as one would fight against drunkenness, impurity, and stealing. There must be a *persistent conflict* with secret ambuscades, self-diplomacy, specious pleadings, not seldom with an indifferent and unconscious drift of the heart into its old penurious channels of getting and saving.

It is manifest from this showing that there can be no *victorious advance* into Satan's kingdom until this citadel—THE UNCHRISTIAN LOVE OF MONEY—is taken. Dr. Bushnell, in his sermon on "How to be a Christian in Trade," says, "The great problem we now have in hand is the Christianizing of the money power of the world." May

we not say it is rather *the Christianizing of the money power of the church*? It is said that the wealth of the members of our Protestant churches is over \$10,000,000,000, and that the annual increase is not less than \$400,000,000.

Even a tithe of this increase would be \$40,000,000, not to speak of that which should come out of the capital in any right acceptance of the doctrine of Christian stewardship. Yet it is a *startling fact* that not more than \$7,000,000 of this amount finds its way into home and foreign missions.

What shall be said then of the *other tens of millions* which, even in a moderate view of Christ's demands for the consecration of money, should *each year* be cast into the treasury of the Lord? Does it not represent just so much *unsanctified selfishness* in the churches?

Is it not manifest, then, what hinders the chariot wheels of God's salvation? There is in many places *praying* and *singing* and *preaching enough*. The radical want now is a *downright, honest consecration of the money power* of the church to the Lord's service; for when this citadel is taken the *whole land surrenders*. Where the treasure is the heart will be.

When a man's sense of possession in his property passes over into a real, effective sense of stewardship, *the battle is won*. Then divine grace in sanctifying power can and does sweep through all the chambers of his being.

See what a marvel happens! That which he gives away, in a tender and Christlike consecra-

tion, becomes *more truly his own* than it was before. He takes *himself* with it over into the Master's service. The heart now becomes interbraided with its givings, as it did before with its holdings. It cleaves to them in great desire and prayer that they shall serve the Master's use ; that they shall bless the poor and bring the wayward back to the fold and carry salvation to the lost. So that which *goes out at the hand comes back*, with large increase, *into the heart*, and the paradox is made clear, " He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

We cannot resist the conviction that the time is at hand when the thought and the power of the church will be concentrated to *bring about this consummation* in the mass of believers. In the nature of things the reign of God in the hearts of man comes with and through this reduction of covetous desire.

The *clenched hand* of selfishness must be transformed into the *open palm* of a glad beneficence. If the kingdom of God is near, this is also near. As the preacher already quoted says, " What we wait for and are looking hopefully to see is a *consecration of the vast money power* of the world to the work and cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ. For that day, when it comes, *is the morning*, so to speak, of the new creation. The tide-wave in the money power can as little be resisted, when God brings it on, as the tides of the sea, and like *these it will flow across the world in a day.*"

If we look into the past, we see that the great

revivals which have now and then blessed the church have each had some marked characteristic. Some doctrine or practice has fallen out of its place in the system of grace, and in the reinstatement of this the revival comes.

If any truth of Christ needs reënthronement in the hearts and practice of believers, *is it not this of Christian stewardship?* In the pentecostal revival not only were great numbers converted but they were converted *clear to and through the bone of selfishness.*

"Great grace was upon them all." "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." Christ's doctrine was radical then; *it is not less radical now*: "Whosoever he be of you that *forsaketh not all that he hath*, he cannot be my disciple." This certainly means something more than we see in the practice of the mass of Christians today.

But some man will say, "What would you have me do? Shall I sell my property and give right and left as the calls come, until nothing is left?" There is a case in point.

A rich young man came to Christ with the question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* He was moral, earnest, sincere, and Christ beholding him *loved him*. He seems to us a most hopeful inquirer. But the Lord saw deeper and more truly than we can. He knew that *down deep* in this young ruler's soul, so deep as to lie almost below his own consciousness, but stubborn, strong,

stronger than all the other good in him, *was this love of possession.*

And the "Go, sell, distribute" was the *testing word*, the Ithuriel spear by whose touch the hidden, invincible selfishness was made to show itself. Suppose the case had taken the other turn. Suppose the young man had said, "Lord, *it shall be as thou wilt.* I put myself under thy direction. Tell me just what to do with my possessions. I have houses in Capernaum, and a fleet of fishing smacks on the lake. There is a wood lot in Lebanon. There are vineyards in Eschol. My flocks and herds are on a thousand hills. I have large treasures in a secure place and in my house is a store of scarlet and fine linen. What shall I do with it all?"

Certainly Christ would not have said, "Go sell all to the first man you meet, for what you can get, and scatter the money among the beggars that will surely flock to you." *He would have counselled no such folly as that.* Would he not have said, "You renounce a selfish ownership in all this, take it back now AS A STEWARD. Hold and administer it in a wise and sincere consecration, as a *sacred trust.* Make it your business henceforth to handle these possessions for me as *you would the estate of an orphan*, taking from it so much as you need for support and holding the balance *subject to my call.*"

Does not this, then, penetrate to the core of the whole trouble as to the church finance and benevolent giving? The appeal to sympathy soon

wears itself out. What is needed is a thorough training in the *principles of Christian stewardship*. We have been letting our buckets down into shallow wells long enough. The thing to do now is to set our forces to driving *artesian* wells that shall pour out living streams of their own sweet will.

This is the new revival that cannot be far distant. Already daybreak predicts the sunrise. There are not a few millionaires who are planning large things for educational and benevolent enterprises. The sentiment of society *begins to set that way*. The name of a man of large wealth who dies and leaves nothing in his will for the public good is held in some *degree of dishonor*.

The number of Christians who adopt *the tithe* as a righteous obligation *steadily gains*. There are Marys in almost every church who, in reverent love, *break* an alabaster-box at the Saviour's feet. The blossoms and fragrance of woman's self-denying gifts begin to fill the land.

The great hindering cause removed, the chariot wheels will no longer tarry, *God's kingdom will come with power!* But under the revealings of the Spirit there will be *terrible convictions* in respect to this sin of covetousness. Men will weep and break their hearts as they read that fearful indictment of James, "*Your riches are corrupted. Your gold and your silver are cankered and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and SHALL EAT YOUR FLESH AS IT WERE FIRE!*" "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth and been

wanton ; ye have nourished your hearts *as in a day of slaughter !*" Men will cry out as of old, " God be merciful to me a sinner !" but they will add another word, " God be merciful to me, a *miserable, COVETOUS sinner !*

I have been a wretched tank, taking in much, giving out nothing. I have suffered the blessings of providence poured into my life to stagnate and cream and mantle and breed miasma. *O God, henceforth let me be a fountain.* Minister to me from 'the upper springs,' and I will evermore *pour out* of thy bounty as thou shalt give it me, in pure and sweet streams for the thirsting and the lost."

We deem it a miracle of redemption when a degraded savage is transformed into a Christian man, with a conscience and a consistent life. It will be no less a miracle of grace when *the man with the muck-rake* shall be made to lift up his eyes from his miserable heap—when his feet, walking through the valley of penitence, shall be placed on the delectable heights where his anointed eyes *shall catch some glimpse* of the gateway to the kingdom of God and see also some of the glory of the place. In that day the money, which in the covetous hand was "*filthy lucre*" will have given it such a divine potency that men will hold it as *a thing sacred to the Lord.*

It will no longer cause the rich to "fall into *temptation and a snare* and into many foolish and hurtful lusts." Through the toil of earning and

the sacrifice, for Christ's sake, of giving, it will *minister grace unto men's souls.*

They will hear over again the words of the Lord, as if it were a very voice from heaven, "*Take your treasure from the safes where thieves break through and steal. Lay it up in the imperishable vaults of heaven.* Put it into the salvation of men's souls to find it again in the *unspeakable joys of the redeemed!*" Then the act of giving will become an act of reverent worship. *The despised contribution-box* to men's changed vision shall seem as the *Saviour's pierced hand* held out, and the offertory be as glad and tender a service *as the sacrament of the Lord!*

